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Statement for the Record
Senate Armed Services Committee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities
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Thank you, Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Ernst, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee and Congress. It is a privilege to be here today to testify on the Department of Defense's efforts to address Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena.

First, I want to thank Congress for its extensive and continued partnership as the Department works to better understand and respond to UAP in an effort to minimize technical and intelligence surprise. Unidentified objects in any domain pose potential risks to safety and security, particularly for military personnel and capabilities. Congress and DoD agree that UAP cannot remain unexamined or unaddressed.

We are grateful for sustained congressional engagement on this issue, which paved the way for DoD's establishment of the All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office in July of last year. Though AARO is still a young office, the spotlight on UAP in recent months underscores the importance of its work and the need for UAP to be taken seriously as a matter of national security. All leadership that I've had the pleasure of working with, whether DoD, IC, DOE, Civil, Scientific or Industrial, view Congress as a critical partner in this endeavor.

AARO has accomplished much in the 9 months since it was established. The AARO team of more than three dozen experts is organized around four functional areas: operations, scientific research, integrated analysis, and strategic communications. In the nine months since AARO's establishment, we have taken important steps to improve UAP data collection, standardize the Department's UAP internal reporting requirements, and implement a framework for rigorous scientific and intelligence

analysis, resolving cases in a systematic and prioritized manner. Meanwhile, consistent with legislative direction, AARO is also carefully reviewing and researching the U.S. Government's UAP-related historical record.

AARO is leading a focused effort to better characterize, understand, and attribute UAP, with priority given to UAP reports by DoD and IC personnel in or near areas of national security importance. DoD fully appreciates the eagerness from many quarters, including here in Congress and in the American public, to quickly resolve every UAP encountered across the globe, from the distant past through today.

It is important to note, however, that AARO is the culmination of decades of DoD, Intelligence Community, and congressionally-directed efforts to successfully resolve UAP encountered first and foremost by U.S. military personnel, specifically Navy and Air Force pilots.

The law establishing AARO is ambitious, and it will take time to realize the full mission. We cannot answer decades of questions about UAP all at once, but we must begin somewhere. While I assure you that AARO will follow scientific evidence wherever it leads, I ask for your patience as DoD first prioritizes the safety and security of our military personnel and installations, in all domains.

After all, UAP encountered first by highly capable DoD and IC platforms, featuring the nation's most advanced sensors, are those UAP most likely to be successfully resolved by my office assuming data can be collected. If AARO succeeds in first improving the ability of military personnel to quickly and confidently resolve UAP that they encounter, I believe that in time we will have greatly advanced the capability of the entire United States Government, including its civilian agencies, to resolve UAP. However, it would be naive to believe that the resolution of all UAP can be solely accomplished by the DoD and IC alone. We will need to prioritize collection and leverage authorities for monitoring all domains within the continental

United States. AARO's ultimate success will require partnerships with the interagency, industry, academia, the scientific community, and the public.

AARO is partnering with the Services, Intelligence Community, DOE and across the U.S. government to tap into the resources of the interagency. The UAP challenge is more an operational and scientific issue than an intelligence issue. As such, we are also working with industry, academia, and the scientific community, which bring their own resources, ideas, and expertise to this challenging problem set. Robust collaboration and peer-review across a broad range of partners will promote greater objectivity and transparency in the study of UAP.

I want to underscore today that only a very small percentage of UAP reports display signatures that could reasonably be described as 'anomalous.' The majority of unidentified objects reported to AARO demonstrate mundane characteristics of balloons, unmanned aerial systems, clutter, natural phenomena, or other readily explainable sources. While a large number of cases in our holdings remain technically unresolved, this is primarily due to a lack of data associated with these cases. Without sufficient data, we are unable to reach defendable conclusions that meet the high scientific standards we set for resolution, and I will not close a case that we cannot defend the conclusions of.

I recognize that this answer is unsatisfying to those who in good faith assume that what they see with their eyes, with their cameras, or with their radars is incontrovertible evidence of extraordinary characteristics and performance. Yet, time and again, with sufficient scientific-quality data, it is fact that UAP often, but not always, resolve into readily-explainable sources. Humans are subject to deception and illusions, sensors to unexpected responses and malfunctions, and in some cases intentional interference. Getting to the handful of cases that pass this level of scrutiny is the mission of AARO.

That is not to say that UAP once resolved are no longer of national security interest, however. On the contrary, learning that a UAP isn't of exotic origin but is instead "just a quadcopter" leads to the question of who is operating that quadcopter, and to what purpose. The answers to those questions will inform potential national security or law enforcement responses.

AARO is a member of the Department's support to the Administration's "Tiger Team" effort to deal with stratospheric objects such as the PRC High Altitude Balloon. When previously unknown objects are successfully identified, it is AARO's role to quickly and efficiently hand off such readily-explainable objects to the Intelligence or Law Enforcement Communities for further analysis and appropriate action. The U.S. Government—and DoD and the IC in particular— has tremendous capabilities to deal with those encountered objects. In the wake of the PRC HAB event, the interagency is working to better integrate and share information to address identifiable stratospheric objects, but that is not AARO's lane.

Meanwhile, for the few cases in all domains that do demonstrate potentially anomalous characteristics, AARO exists to help the DoD, IC, and interagency resolve those anomalous cases. In doing so, AARO is approaching these cases with the highest level of objectivity and analytic rigor. This includes physically testing and employing modeling and simulation to validate our analyses and underlying theories, then peer reviewing the results within the U.S. Government, industry partners, and with appropriately-cleared academic institutions before reaching any conclusions.

I should also state clearly for the record that in our research AARO has found no credible evidence thus far of extraterrestrial activity, off-world technology, or objects that defy the known laws of physics. In the event sufficient scientific data were ever obtained that a UAP encountered can only be explained by extraterrestrial origin, we are committed to working with our interagency partners at NASA to appropriately inform the U.S. Government's leadership of its findings. For those few cases that

have been leaked to the public previously, and subsequently commented on by the U.S. Government, I encourage those who hold alternative theories or views to submit your research to credible peer-reviewed scientific journals. AARO is working to do the same. That is how science works, not by blog or social media.

We know that there is tremendous public interest in UAP and a desire for answers from AARO. By its very nature, the UAP challenge has for decades lent itself to mystery, sensationalism, and even conspiracy. For that reason, AARO remains committed to transparency, accountability, and to sharing as much with the American public as we can, consistent with our obligation to protect intelligence sources and methods and U.S. and Allied capabilities. However, AARO's work will take time if we are committed to doing it right. It means adhering to the scientific method and the highest standards of research integrity. It means being methodical and scrupulous. It means withholding judgment in favor of evidence. It means following the data where it leads, wherever it leads. It means establishing scientific, peer reviewed theoretical underpinnings of observed data. AARO is committed to those standards.

I am proud of AARO's progress over the last nine months. Much remains to be done, but the hard work is under way.

Thank you for your continued support, and I look forward to your questions.